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# **News Release**

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## **5 indicted for conspiracy to commit bank fraud**

A federal indictment charging five people in connection with an alleged scheme to defraud financial institutions by means of false and fraudulent pretenses was unsealed yesterday following the arrests of the five defendants in Duluth.

Charged Sept. 18 in Minneapolis each with one count of conspiracy to commit bank fraud were: Aaron Samuel Traiforos, 23, Duluth; Angelika Sopiha Traiforos, 27, Duluth; Doreen Elaine Traiforos, 48, Duluth; Dandre Ladae Robinson, 21, unknown address; and David Briant Thompson, 38, Duluth. Angelika Traiforos was also charged with one count of aggravated identity theft.

Their indictment alleges that from November 2003 through January 2006, the five knowingly and intentionally conspired with each other and others to execute the scheme. The object of the conspiracy was to enrich the co-conspirators by producing forged and counterfeit checks to obtain money at financial institutions and merchandise from businesses in Minnesota and elsewhere.

The defendants, the indictment alleges, obtained information about a victim and opened a checking account using false identification in that victim's name. They allegedly obtained bank checks, which were then used to obtain money and merchandise. During the time period of the conspiracy, the defendants negotiated more than \$80,000 in forged checks.

Angelika Traiforos allegedly recruited individuals to use their true names to act as "check passers," who would then cash the forged checks at financial institutions and businesses throughout the Duluth area. Angelika Traiforos allegedly obtained the victim's Social Security card and birth certificate in November 2003, and acting as the victim she used those documents to obtain a Wisconsin identification card.

In December 2005, Angelika Traiforos posing as the victim, allegedly opened a checking account at a Duluth bank, and ordered blank checks using the victim's name.

If convicted, each of the defendants face a potential maximum penalty of five years in

prison on the conspiracy count, and Angelika Traiforos faces a potential mandatory minimum of two years on the aggravated identity theft count. All sentences are determined by a federal district court judge. This case is the result of an investigation by the United States Postal Inspection Service, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Duluth Police Department, and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Richard Newberry.

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An indictment is a determination by a grand jury that there is probable cause to believe that offenses have been committed by a defendant. A defendant, of course, is presumed innocent until he or she pleads guilty or is proven guilty at trial.